

How Will My Heart Endure

Philip Doddridge (1702–1751)

How will my heart endure
The terrors of that day,
When earth and heaven before His face
Astonish'd shrink away?

But ere the trumpet shakes
The mansions of the dead,
Hark! from the Gospel's cheering sound
What joyful tidings spread.

Ye sinners, seek His grace,
Whose wrath ye cannot bear;
Fly to the shelter of His Cross,
And find salvation there.

So shall that curse remove,
By which the Saviour bled;
And the last awful day shall pour
His blessings on your head.

ΤΩ ΚΡΟΝΟΥ ΚΑΙΡΩ

In the Nick of Time

Sharing the Glory

Don Odens

The God of the Bible is infinitely glorious! His glory is beyond comprehension or adequate description. Scripture has far more to say about that glory than this brief essay can reflect, but one concept arrested my interest while reading in the New Testament: the truth that God planned in eternity to share His glory with men.

What is glory? The word group translated *glory*, *glorious*, or *to glorify* in the Old Testament has the basic concept of heaviness or weightiness. However, of the 376 times it occurs in the Old Testament it describes physical weight only twice (1 Sam 4:18; 2 Sam 14:26). Most of its uses are figurative, communicating the honor, magnitude, noteworthiness, or severity of an event, object, or person. When used to describe God, those terms speak of His excellence, His greatness in knowledge and power, the honor (weight) due to Him, His magnificence, and His splendor.

The manifestation of God's glory is beyond human comprehension or expression. The best the prophet Ezekiel could manage when describing the images which manifested God's Person and presence was to write that He was "like" a variety of more familiar items (79 times). Isaiah was awestruck when granted a vision of the glory of the pre-incarnate Christ (Isa 6:5).

Scripture reveals that God's glory is His supreme objective. A. H. Strong wrote, "God's supreme end in creation is nothing outside of Himself, but is his own glory..., the infinite perfection of his own being." The OT describes Him as being jealous of His glory in twelve passages (cf. Exod 34:14). He refuses to share that glory with any other being or object of worship (Isa 42:8; 48:11).

Evidently, Adam and Eve observed God's glory in their original state (Gen 2:15, 19, 22). Genesis 3:8 suggests that they engaged in intimate fellowship with this glorious God regularly. However, Adam and Eve forfeited their opportunity to experience God's glory when they gave their personal desire greater weight than God. As a result, they were evicted from the Garden and God's glorious presence. In the process, Scripture teaches that "all sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Rom 3:23). "To fall short" means to lack, to fail to experience, to be deficient of something. This verse



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describes sinful man's continuing state. As a result of our sin, mankind is *impoverished* when it comes to God's glory and *incapable* of experiencing it. Sinful humans have no hope of experiencing God's glory!

God revealed His presence in a variety of ways in history but men observed His glory in limited ways. The people of Israel saw it in the pillar of cloud and fire during the Exodus (Exod 13:21-22). God's glory filled the most holy place in the Tabernacle following its construction (Exod 40:34-35). Later, the glory filled Solomon's Temple, forcing the priests to evacuate (2 Chron 5:11-14). On Moses' sixth climb to the summit of Mount Sinai, he asked God to reveal His full glory (Exod 33:18). God responded that it was not possible, "for no man can see Me and live!" (Exod 33:20). Moses would have died if exposed to such glory in its full intensity. Graciously, the Lord permitted him to see a reflection of His glory after His presence passed by. Peter, James, and John saw Jesus undergo a transformation in appearance which reflected His pre-incarnate glory, describable only in terms of the brightness of the sun and the whiteness of light (Matt 17:2). John wrote, "We saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father" (John 1:14). Few have had that experience.

Where does that leave us? Are we without hope of experiencing God's glory? No! Paul indicated that God's eternal plan provided opportunity for sinful man to share His glory. He described the gospel as "the hidden wisdom which God predestined before the ages *to our glory*" (1 Cor 2:7, emphasis added). Christ's suffering was an essential part of "bringing many sons to glory" (Heb 2:10). The gospel is God's invitation to sinners to share His glory (2 Thess 2:14). The apostle Peter affirmed that God invited believers to His eternal glory (1 Pet 5:10). That is no bargain basement version. It is "His own glory and excellence" (2 Pet 1:3). Jude assured his readers that God is fully capable of sharing His glory with believing sinners inasmuch as He is "able to keep you from stumbling, to make you stand in the presence of His glory blameless with great joy" (Jude 24). The whole purpose of preaching the gospel is that those whom God has chosen "may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus and with it eternal glory" (2 Tim 2:10).

When and how might that occur? At one level, it is occurring right now in the process of sanctification as believers "are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory" (2 Cor 3:18). However, the process will be full and final only when believers are raptured at some future date. Though the body of a believer who dies before Christ's return "is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory" (1 Cor 15:43). At that moment, Christ will "transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory" (Phil 3:21). In fact, "When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory" (Col 3:4). The believer's glorious state will be permanent from that point on. God has invited sinners to experience His "*eternal glory*" (1 Pet 5:10, emphasis added). Every believer "will always be with the Lord" (1 Thess 4:17).

A final note: the anticipation of sharing God's glory is not based on individual performance. Believers who have this hope should always be "abounding in the work of the Lord" (1 Cor 15:58). However, the possibility of glory does not lie in personal effort. It is purely the result of the sinner's union with Christ, for "the riches of the glory of this mystery...is *Christ in you*, the hope of glory" (Col 1:27, emphasis added). Glory!



This essay is by Don Odens, Adjunct Assistant Professor of Practical Theology at Central Baptist Theological Seminary. Not every one of the professors, students, or alumni of Central Seminary necessarily agrees with every opinion that it expresses.
